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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000031

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TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM ASEC GV

SUBJECT: FORMER PM CELLOU DIALLO ON ELECTIONS, ETHNICITY,  
AND CORRUPTION

REF: CONAKRY 0823

Classified By: POL/ECON CHIEF SHANNON CAZEAU FOR REASON 1.4 B AND D

**¶1.** (SBU) SUMMARY. Former Prime Minister and opposition political leader Cellou Diallo maintains that the CNDD's primary focus should be to organize legislative elections within the next six months. He expressed concern over the ethnic composition of the government to date, but noted that any perceived imbalances may be due to inexperience rather than intention. Self-deprecating, he described himself as a "man of some controversy," as he explained why his opponents keep targeting him with allegations of corruption. END SUMMARY.

**¶2.** (SBU) On January 8, Poloff met with former Prime Minister and opposition political party leader Cellou Dalein Diallo of the Union of Guinean Democratic Forces (UFDG). The meeting took place in the UFDG's new party headquarters, which was opened a few months ago. Located in the heart of Hamdallaye, a predominantly Peuhl neighborhood, the three-story building was a bustling hive of activity. Dozens of people were milling about on the terraces while others worked in numerous offices. A photographer and videographer were present to record the first few minutes of the meeting. Oury Bah, the former Minister of Reconciliation and Diallo's right-hand, was also present, as were several other members of the UFDG's executive board.

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LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS MUST BE THE PRIORITY  
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**¶3.** (U) Diallo reaffirmed his party's position, as recently delineated in a declaration issued by several political parties (reftel), asserting that legislative elections should be held within the next six months. He noted that preparations are already well underway and pointed out that political parties had already agreed to May 31 as an acceptable election date before President Conte died. Diallo emphasized that the country needs a legitimate National Assembly to move forward. "We can proceed on schedule with the legislative elections and then organize the presidential elections after the rainy season" (which typically ends in September), he said. Diallo added that if presidential elections were to be held before legislative elections, he would be concerned that the new executive might attempt to influence results.

**¶4.** (U) Turning to the transitional government as embodied in the Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), Diallo said that President Camara and his administration should have only one objective: organize legislative elections as quickly as possible. "We already had a government of transition under (former Prime Minister) Kouyate...and he too failed to do what he needed to do, which was simply to organize elections," Diallo said. Poloff agreed that the CNDD's focus

should be on elections and a quick transition to civilian control.

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COMMENTS ON ETHNIC MARGINALIZATION  
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15. (SBU) In response to a question about perceived ethnic imbalances in the new government, Diallo told Poloff "yes, my community (meaning the Peuhls) feels marginalized." However, he noted that the current ethnic imbalance may not actually be intentional, but rather a reflection of the new government's inexperience. "I have already told the new prime minister that he needs to be very careful about maintaining an ethnic balance," he said.

16. (SBU) Referring to the military's January 1 raid on his private residence (refftel), Diallo explained that many of his constituents construed the incident as an intentional attack on the Peuhl community. "I had to start calling people immediately, both in Guinea and abroad, to calm them down," he said. According to Diallo, Peuhls were ready to march into the streets to protest the military's actions. Diallo said that it is much more important to get to elections than to worry in the short-term about the ethnic composition of a government that is not supposed to be in power for very long.

17. (SBU) Poloff commented on the January 1 incident, noting that both the CNDD and the prime minister had apologized after the fact. Diallo agreed and said that he willingly accepted the public and private apologies in order to "tamp down the ethnic response," especially with the Diaspora.

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Diallo confirmed that two military groups came to his house, one in the morning, and one in the afternoon. He said the first group was led by a member of the CNDD although he did not specify who. Diallo said that the second group was completely different, and was claiming to "conduct an investigation." The second group reportedly demanded that Diallo accompany them back to Camp Alpha Yaya. Diallo said that he refused and a delegation of UFDG party members went to the camp to intervene with the CNDD, which ultimately resulted in the military leaving Diallo's compound.

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A MAN OF CONTROVERSY  
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18. (SBU) Shrugging off the incident with a smile, Diallo said "you know, I am a man of some controversy." He said that some people view him with suspicion because he spent ten years working with the late President Conte. Distancing himself from Conte, he said "I have my own vision of what needs to be done," adding that other individuals may be seeking to discredit him because "they prefer to get rid of me before the election so that they have a better chance at the polls."

19. (SBU) Poloff asked Diallo if he had seen an anonymous list of 50 of Guinea's "economic predators," which was circulating last week. Digging through the papers on his desk, Diallo pulled out the list, laughing. "Yes, I'm on here for having stolen \$15 million...no, wait, make that \$30 million," he said. Dismissing the claims as ridiculous, Diallo told Poloff "for some people the sole available means of seizing power is to discredit others." The former Minister of Reconciliation, Oury Bah, chimed in and said he was sure that one of the other political parties had issued the list. (COMMENT. Rival opposition leader Sidya Toure of the Union of Republican Forces, UFR, was also on the list. END COMMENT).

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COMMENT  
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¶10. (C) There is more than "some" controversy surrounding Cellou Diallo. As a former Minister of Transport and then Prime Minister who allegedly has millions of dollars at his disposal, his name frequently comes up when people start talking about corruption. He is also viewed with suspicion because of his membership in the late President Conte's Party for Unity and Progress, and his long years of service to the regime. Since assuming leadership of the UFDG a little over a year ago, he has been doggedly working to build up his constituent base, especially in Lower Guinea, which is predominantly Peuhl. Numerous contacts have commented that Diallo has successfully edged out rival opposition leader Ousmane Bah of the Union for Progress and Renewal as the leading political figure in the region. If the level of energy at the party's headquarters is any indication, the UFDG is a party that is serious about preparing for elections. END COMMENT.

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